

# Word-of-mouth shapes teenage music consumption

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This research was conducted by **Noémi Berlin, Anna Bernard and Guillaume Fürst** at the **University of Edinburgh, UK; the University of Paris I (Panthéon Sorbonne), France** and the **University of Geneva, Switzerland**

## Summary

This paper looked at the role of price and marketing on the popularity of songs in the commercial music market. The researchers devised an experiment with high school students that simulated the process of buying music, and observed whether or not people chose to purchase best-selling popular songs or experiment with new releases. The research found that the teenagers imitated others' behaviour and considered the opinions of their peers. The more information they had the more they chose popular rather than new music. The experiment also showed that when there were price incentives for choosing new music over popular music (i.e. it was cheaper), people's habits responded accordingly.

## The experiment involved 110 French high school students

They were given a choice of buying either a 'popular' or 'new' song (the researchers did their utmost to ensure that both were equivalent in all other regards – all that differed was their novelty). The participants were divided into three groups: one simply listened to their preferred song (and possibly the equivalent in the other category) and rated them; a second group were informed of the rating given to the songs by the first group before picking which song to listen to; the third group had a slightly more complicated task which involved selling the music to their peers.

## By subsidising new music the industry may diversity the market

The experiment also found that new music was sought out by a large minority of teenagers (40% in the study), which signifies a crucial element in the real market: a particular kind of novelty-seeking behaviour. All in all, the authors are eager to point out that the results of the experiment may only apply to teenagers and not all adults.

### Keywords

music experiment popular France teenagers

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